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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 DJIBOUTI 000077

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF
STATE PASS USAID
USAID FOR OFDA/ECARP
NAIROBI FOR REDSO AND OFDA
PARIS FOR OECD
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI AND FOOD SECURITY

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. REDSO/FFP OFFICER TRAVELED TO DJIBOUTI 3-8 NOVEMBER, MET WITH WFP, UNHCR AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, AND TRAVELED TO DIKHIL AND TADJOURAH DISTRICTS TO ASSESS FOOD SECURITY CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

[1](#)2. DUE TO SUCCESSIVE SCANTY RAINFALL SEASONS AND INCREASED MARKET PRICES, THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION OF DJIBOUTIANS IS POOR - THOUGH NOT CURRENTLY AT A CRITICAL LEVEL - WITH INCREASING STRESS ON PASTORALISTS AS WELL AS ON URBAN DWELLERS. WFP WILL EXTEND ITS EMERGENCY OPERATION (EMOP) THROUGH MARCH 2006, AT WHICH TIME IT WILL TRANSITION INTO A PROTRACTED RELIEF AND RECOVERY OPERATION (PRRO). WFP PLANS A JOINT FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT IN BOTH RURAL AND URBAN AREAS TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY AND QUANTIFY NEXT YEAR'S PROPOSED PRRO.

[1](#)3. THE OFFICIAL REFUGEE POPULATION IN DJIBOUTI NOW STANDS AT AROUND 9,600 PEOPLE (THOUGH IS BELIEVED TO BE ACTUALLY SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER) IN TWO CAMPS, DOWN FROM 15,600 IN THREE CAMPS DURING OUR LAST VISIT IN APRIL. UNHCR NOW HOPES TO REPATRIATE APPROXIMATELY 4,000 MORE PEOPLE TO SOMALILAND BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, AND IS NEGOTIATING WITH THE GRD TO CLOSE HOLL-HOLL CAMP. WFP CONTINUES TO PROVIDE HALF RATIONS TO REFUGEES IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THE CURRENT MOMENTUM OF VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION, CONSIDERING ALSO THAT CASELOAD NUMBERS ARE QUITE INFLATED AND THAT THE REFUGEES HAVE NOT ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BE COUNTED SINCE 1997.

[1](#)4. REDSO/FFP AND USAID/DJIBOUTI RECOMMEND THAT FFP CONTRIBUTE \$750,000 TO THE WFP/DJIBOUTI EMOP, ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT PART OF THIS CONTRIBUTION WILL CARRY OVER INTO THE SUCCESSOR PRRO IN APRIL. WE DO NOT RECOMMEND A CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFUGEE PRRO AT THIS TIME, THOUGH DO BELIEVE THAT AN ADDITIONAL \$750,000 MAY BE NECESSARY LATER IN FY 2006 TO RESPOND TO SHORTFALLS IN BOTH THE REFUGEE PRRO AND THE UPCOMING DROUGHT-AFFECTED PRRO.
END SUMMARY

DJIBOUTIAN FOOD SECURITY SITUATION: FIELD VISITS

[1](#)5. THE CURRENT FOOD SECURITY SITUATION OF RURAL DJIBOUTIANS IS POOR, BUT NOT CRITICAL - RATHER SIMILAR TO WHAT WE FOUND IN APRIL. WHILE DJIBOUTI COULD NEVER BE DESCRIBED AS LUSH - WITH LESS THAN 150 MM AVERAGE ANNUAL RAINFALL - PASTORALISTS ARE DEPENDENT ON THESE MINIMAL RAINS TO SUSTAIN THEIR LIVESTOCK WITH WATER AND PASTURE. ACCORDING TO FEWS, THE RECENT KARAN RAINS WERE POORLY DISTRIBUTED, AND CURRENT COASTAL KEYS/DADA RAINS HAVE BEEN DELAYED. SUCCESSIVE POOR RAINFALL SEASONS HAVE INCREASED STRESS ON PASTORALISTS SEARCHING FOR WATER AND PASTURE.

[1](#)6. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO FEWSNET, BECAUSE OF FUEL PRICE INCREASES, OVER THE PAST FOUR MONTHS THE COST OF ESSENTIAL FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEMS HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY, HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE FOOD SECURITY OF BOTH RURAL AND URBAN POOR HOUSEHOLDS. AS A RESULT, CASUAL LABOR OPPORTUNITIES ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO DECLINE, FURTHER REDUCING INCOME AND FOOD ACCESS FOR POOR URBAN HOUSEHOLDS. WFP IS CURRENTLY PROVIDING EMERGENCY FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS TO AROUND 47,500 DROUGHT-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS FOR A SIX-MONTH PERIOD.

[1](#)7. IN DIKHIL DISTRICT, REDSO/FFP VISITED YEBOKI AND HANLAY VILLAGES. WFP DISTRIBUTES GENERAL RATIONS TO 44 LOCALITIES IN THE DISTRICT, AS WELL AS FOOD TO 11 SCHOOLS. DIKHIL PASTORALISTS NOTED THAT THE PASTURE AND WATER SITUATION WAS NOW MORE DIFFICULT FOLLOWING TWO POOR YEARS IN A ROW, WITH A NUMBER OF REPORTED ANIMAL DEATHS - MAINLY GOATS AND YOUNG CAMELS. FUEL FOR THE VILLAGE BOREHOLE, HOWEVER, RATHER THAN FOOD, WAS AT THE TOP OF THEIR NEEDS LIST.

[1](#)8. IN TADJOURAH, THE SITUATION WAS REPORTED TO BE MORE DIFFICULT IN LESS-ACCESSIBLE INLAND COMMUNITIES OF DORRA AND THE LAKE

ASSAL AREA, THOUGH THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF A MAJOR CRISIS. TADJOURAH HOSPITAL WAS JUST OPENING A THERAPEUTIC FEEDING CENTER, WITH SUPPORT FROM WFP, AND HAD NOT SEEN LARGE NUMBERS OF MALNOURISHED CHILDREN TO DATE. HOWEVER, THEY THOUGHT THAT ONCE THE FEEDING PROGRAM BEGAN RUNNING, MORE CHILDREN WOULD ARRIVE.

19. WFP DISTRIBUTES FOOD TO 10,000 DROUGHT-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN TADJOURAH DISTRICT, THOUGH LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN CLAMORING FOR SUPPORT TO SOME 16,000 PEOPLE - EVEN THOUGH THE ORIGINAL FIGURE HAS BEEN THOUGHT TO BE SOMEWHAT HIGHER EVEN THAN THE ACTUAL RURAL POPULATION. WFP WILL CONTINUE USING THE INITIAL FIGURES, BEING EXTREMELY WARY OF THE EXAGGERATED POPULATION NUMBERS, AND BELIEVES IT NEEDS TO BEGIN PHASING OUT THE GENERAL DISTRIBUTIONS SINCE THEY ARE NOT CRITICALLY NEEDED.

110. WFP BEGAN DISTRIBUTING GENERAL RATIONS IN SEPTEMBER, AND PEOPLE NOTED THAT THEY WERE BEING SHARED WITH OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITIES, ENDING UP WITH JUST A FEW KG PER PERSON. HOWEVER, WHEN PEOPLE WERE QUESTIONED ABOUT THE "INSUFFICIENT" FOOD QUANTITIES, THEY COMPLAINED MAINLY ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF SUGAR RATHER THAN OTHER COMMODITIES.

111. ALTHOUGH MANY (IN FACT, VIRTUALLY ALL) RURAL FAMILIES RECEIVE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FROM THEIR RELATIVES IN DJIBOUTI CITY, THERE ARE SOME CHRONICALLY VULNERABLE IN THE VILLAGES WHO REMAIN IN NEED. IN ADDITION, WITH THE CURRENT FOOD SECURITY SITUATION FOR RURAL DJIBOUTIANS BECOMING MORE FRAGILE, THERE HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL PASTORAL MIGRATION TO ETHIOPIA (MOSTLY SEASONAL) AS WELL AS TO DJIBOUTI CITY TO SEEK WORK AND FOOD. GIVEN THE RISES IN FOOD AND NON-FOOD PRICES, THERE IS CLEARLY A NEED TO ASSESS THE CITY AS WELL TO DETERMINE URBAN FOOD SECURITY CONDITIONS.

112. WFP/DIKHIL STAFF WERE VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND INFORMATIVE, AND NOTED THE DIFFICULTIES OF GENERAL DISTRIBUTION ESPECIALLY REGARDING POPULATION NUMBERS, SUGGESTING THAT FOCUSING ON NUTRITION AND FFW COULD BE A BETTER ALTERNATIVE TO GENERAL DISTRIBUTIONS. WFP/TADJOURAH STAFF HOWEVER WERE SOMEWHAT WEAKER THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES IN DIKIL, PARROTING COMMUNITY REQUESTS FOR 50% POPULATION INCREASES IN THE GENERAL DISTRIBUTION WITHOUT ANY SOLID ASSESSMENT OR ANALYSIS.

113. WFP PLANS A JOINT FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT WITH FEWS, UNICEF AND THE GRD IN DECEMBER. WHILE MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE SITUATION REMAINS SERIOUS, THE MORE DIFFICULT ISSUES WILL BE POPULATION NUMBERS, TARGETING APPROACH AND THE SITUATION OF URBAN DWELLERS. DJIBOUTI'S FIRST EVER MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER, ADDING WHAT IS HOPED WILL BE A LEVEL OF BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TARGETING PROCESS. FOR NOW, HOWEVER, THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS WFP NEEDS TO ANSWER ARE: HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE MOST AFFECTED AND CHRONICALLY VULNERABLE; AND HOW CAN IT BEST TARGET THEM?

114. IF THE COASTAL KEYS/DADA RAINS FAIL OCTOBER-FEBRUARY, CONDITIONS WILL REMAIN SERIOUS. BASED ON THE UPCOMING JOINT ASSESSMENT IN DECEMBER, WFP WILL LIKELY CONVERT ITS EMERGENCY OPERATION (EMOP) INTO A PROTRACTED RELIEF AND RECOVERY OPERATION (PRRO) BEGINNING IN APRIL. WFP PLANS TO USE THE ASSESSMENT TO JUSTIFY AND QUANTIFY A PLANNED TWO-THREE YEAR PRRO FOR VULNERABLE DJIBOUTIANS, PHASING OUT GENERAL DISTRIBUTIONS AND PHASING IN FOOD-FOR-WORK ACTIVITIES AND MORE TARGETED SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN RURAL AND POSSIBLY URBAN AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

REFUGEE STATUS

115. THE RELATIVELY SMALL DJIBOUTI REFUGEE CASELOAD HAS OVER THE YEARS BEEN ONE OF THE BIGGEST HEADACHES PER CAPITA WORLDWIDE, WITH REFUGEES REFUSING TO BE COUNTED SINCE 1997 AND REPATRIATION MOVEMENT SLOW. HOWEVER, UNHCR IN THE LAST TWO YEARS HAS HELPED GREATLY IN BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR REPATRIATION, WITH WFP'S RATION CUTS SINCE MARCH THIS YEAR PLAYING A LARGE SUPPORTING ROLE.

116. REFUGEE NUMBERS ARE DOWN TO AROUND 9,600 PEOPLE FROM 15,600 IN APRIL, AND AOUR AOUSSA CAMP WAS CLOSED IN MID-2005 - DUE TO UNHCR'S REPATRIATION PUSH, AS WELL AS TO WFP'S RATION CUTS. UNHCR IS NOW PLANNING TO REPATRIATE APPROXIMATELY 4,000 MORE REFUGEES TO SOMALILAND BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THERE IS A PLAN TO CLOSE HOLL-HOLL CAMP IN THE COMING MONTHS, AND THE NEW UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE IS BEGINNING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GRD ON A TARGET DATE. THAT SAID, CURRENT INSTABILITY IN ETHIOPIA IS NOT ADDING ANY URGENCY TO CAMP CLOSURE AT THE MOMENT.

117. REFUGEE NUMBERS HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN, AND UNHCR/WFP ESTABLISHED JOINTLY EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT HALF RATIONS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE PROVIDED UNLESS A REVALIDATION EXERCISE COULD TAKE PLACE. WFP HOWEVER CONTINUES ITS SUPPORT TO SUPPLEMENTARY AND THERAPEUTIC FEEDING CENTERS IN THE CAMPS.

118. WFP HAS NOW ALREADY MAINTAINED 50% REFUGEE RATIONS FOR THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS. THE MEDICAL NGO AMDA HAS CONDUCTED MONTHLY NUTRITIONAL ASSESSMENTS WITH WFP, AND NOTED NO ADVERSE EFFECTS FROM THIS REDUCTION, DUE LIKELY TO WHAT ARE BELIEVED TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY EXAGGERATED OFFICIAL REFUGEE NUMBERS. WFP AND AMDA

OF COURSE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE NUTRITIONAL SITUATION IN THE CAMPS.

19. THE NEW UNHCR/DJIBOUTI REPRESENTATIVE, DILLAH DOUMAYE, IS NOW FOCUSED (CORRECTLY IN OUR VIEW) ON REPATRIATION RATHER THAN ON A REVALIDATION EXERCISE, AND VOLUNTARY REPATRIATES TO RELATIVELY-SAFE SOMALILAND HAVE INCREASED THIS YEAR, PARTIALLY DUE TO THE REDUCED FOOD RATIONS IN THE CAMPS. IT IS AS YET UNCLEAR WHAT STAND HE WILL TAKE ON THE HALF-RATION ISSUE, BUT REDSO/FFPO AND UNHCR'S OWN STAFF EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR CONTINUATION OF THIS DURING OUR VISIT. WFP HAS NOW DONE THE SAME FOLLOWING OUR VISIT. THERE IS CERTAINLY A NEED FOR A CONCERTED EFFORT TO MAINTAIN HALF RATIONS IN THE CAMPS AND CONTINUE THE REPATRIATION MOMENTUM THAT HAS BEEN BUILT UP OVER THE PAST MONTHS.

WFP PLANS

20. FFP CONTRIBUTED APPROXIMATELY \$1.5 MILLION TO WFP IN FY 2005, ROUGHLY SPLIT BETWEEN VULNERABLE DJIBOUTIANS AND REFUGEES (INCLUDING THE REPATRIATION FOOD PACKAGE). THE PIPELINE FOR THE EMOP IS CURRENTLY STRONG, BUT WILL REQUIRE SUPPORT BEFORE ITS REMAINING COMMODITIES ARE CARRIED OVER INTO THE NEW PRRO IN APRIL. THE REFUGEE PRRO'S PIPELINE IS CURRENTLY RATHER HEALTHY (WITH HALF RATIONS) THROUGH MID-2006.

21. AT PRESENT, WFP HAS THREE OPERATIONS IN DJIBOUTI: 1) DROUGHT-AFFECTED EMOP; 2) COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SUPPORTING SCHOOL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL FEEDING; AND 3) REFUGEE PRRO. WFP/DJIBOUTI'S NEW COUNTRY DIRECTOR BELIEVES THIS IS TOO MANY FOR SUCH A SMALL COUNTRY, AND WFP SHOULD HAVE A SINGLE PRRO FOR ALL ITS ACTIVITIES.

22. WFP PLANS TO ACHIEVE THIS IN THREE STEPS: FIRST, PHASE OUT THE EMOP'S GENERAL DISTRIBUTIONS, AND PHASE IN FOOD-FOR-WORK ACTIVITIES WITH APRIL'S PRRO. THE DECEMBER FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT WILL HELP TO JUSTIFY THIS NEW PRRO; SECOND, THOUGH STILL IN THE DISCUSSION STAGE, POSSIBLY PUT THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INTO THIS PRRO, WHERE THE ACTIVITIES COULD HAVE MORE FLEXIBILITY AND LIKELY BETTER FUNDING AS WELL; AND THIRD, END THE REFUGEE PRRO BY DECEMBER 2006 OR (IF THE CASELOAD REMAINS OVER 5,000 PEOPLE) FOLD IT INTO ONE ALL-ENCOMPASSING PRRO IN 2007. WE THINK THAT WFP'S STREAMLINING PLANS MAKE SENSE FOR SUCH A SMALL COUNTRY AND PROGRAM.

23. IN THE MORE IMMEDIATE TERM, WFP NEEDS TO CONDUCT A JOINT IN-DEPTH FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING THE URBAN AREAS, AND HELP BETTER IDENTIFY POPULATION NUMBERS, TARGETING CRITERIA AND MECHANISMS TO REPLACE GENERAL DISTRIBUTIONS.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

24. REDSO/FFP AND USAID/DJIBOUTI BELIEVE THAT THE FOOD SECURITY DIFFICULTIES IN DJIBOUTI ARE SERIOUS, THOUGH NOT CURRENTLY AT CRITICAL LEVELS, AND THAT A JOINT FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT COMPRISING FEWS, WFP, UNICEF AND GRD SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY AND QUANTIFY WFP'S TRANSITION TO A PRRO FROM ITS CURRENT EMOP. USAID/FFP WILL ALSO BE INVOLVED WITH WFP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PRRO.

25. WE ADDITIONALLY BELIEVE THAT UNHCR IS HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BY CONTINUING TO BUILD REPATRIATION MOMENTUM, HAVING NOW CLOSED AOUR AOUSSA CAMP AND TRYING TO CLOSE HOLL-HOLL IN THE COMING MONTHS. WFP'S HALF RATION HAS LIKELY HAD AN IMPACT IN THE REPATRIATION INCREASES, WITH SOMALILANDERS NOW LESS RELUCTANT TO RETURN HOME. IN ORDER TO ALLOW THESE REFUGEES TO CONTINUE REPATRIATING VOLUNTARILY, WE BELIEVE THAT STRONG INERTIA-INDUCING DRAGS TYING THEM TO THE CAMPS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE REMOVED, AND THAT WFP IS FULLY JUSTIFIED IN MAINTAINING THE REDUCED REFUGEE RATION.

26. THERE WILL BE CONTINUING FOOD SECURITY NEEDS IN DJIBOUTI THROUGH 2006, AT LEVELS TO BE DETERMINED IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS. GIVEN THESE CONTINUING NEEDS, AND THAT WFP'S NEW PRRO WILL NEED RESOURCES AS SOON AS IT BEGINS IN APRIL, WE RECOMMEND THAT FFP IMMEDIATELY PROVIDE \$750,000 TO WFP'S CURRENT EMOP, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT PART OF THIS COULD BE CARRIED OVER TO THE EMOP'S SUCCEEDING PRRO.

27. WE DO NOT RECOMMEND A CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFUGEE PRRO AT THIS TIME, THOUGH DO BELIEVE AN ADDITIONAL \$750,000 MAY BE WARRANTED LATER IN FY 2006 FOR THE REFUGEE PRRO AS WELL AS THE UPCOMING DROUGHT-AFFECTED PRRO. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR AND REPORT ON THE SITUATION, AND RECOMMEND FURTHER RESOURCES AS APPROPRIATE.